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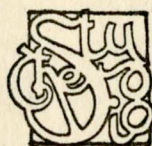
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MODERN MASTERS OF ETCHING
SIR FRANK SHORT, R.A., P.R.E.

INTRODUCTION BY
MALCOLM C.
SALAMAN



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1925

THE STUDIO
44 LEICESTER SQUARE LONDON

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Short, Frank, 1857-
Sir Frank Short, R.A., P.R.
E.



WHEN in 1883 Frank Short came from his native Stourbridge to London he was twenty-six years of age and an Associate Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, but the purpose of his coming was to study Art. In the Midlands he had had his training as an engineer, and learnt to express the practical instincts of his temperament, developing that love of tools and materials with which he was to win to mastery of craftsmanship when his career turned definitely into the graphic ways of expression. In Stourbridge, however, as anywhere else, to borrow Whistler's phrase, "Art happens," and even in a town "that pipes the morning up before the lark with shrieking steam, and from a hundred stalks lacquers the sooty sky," nature had called to the young engineer and shown him beauty and led him in his leisure time to the local school of art. There he made the most of what teaching he could get in drawing, and with his practice of sketching from nature wherever opportunity offered, his instinct for craftsmanship soon induced an attempt to be graphic upon a copper-plate. This was in 1882. *Street in Ludlow* was his first etching, made from a drawing done on the spot, a picturesque affair of old gabled houses, with a warehouse and a derrick characteristically taken in by the engineer's eye, and this Short printed in a wringing machine as a substitute for a press. It was

a line-etching, but even so early the future reviver and master of the arts of mezzotint and aquatint was eager to experiment with tone, and this he did by putting a sand-grain over the etched design. This process he repeated with his second etching, *Pit Gin*, which he had drawn direct on the copper in Rufford's Fields, near Stourbridge, and with other early plates. In these essays he seemed to feel that engraving might after all be his true vocation, and he determined to equip himself for this venture without at the same time burning his boats as an engineer.

So Frank Short came to London, studied drawing from "the life" at the Westminster School of Art, joined for the short time that it lasted the Royal Institute's School of Water-colour Painting, and, most important of all, entered the etching class of the National Art Training School at South Kensington, as the Royal College of Art was then called. This was the class which eventually, under Short's direction for thirty-three years, developed into the famous School of Engraving through which the master, loyal always to the traditions of pure technique, has exercised so wide and beneficial an influence on the practice of the engraving arts. When he joined the class it comprised, on an average, some half-a-dozen students. It was directed by Frederick Goulding, who had succeeded Alphonse Legros, but Goulding himself,

though a past master of printing from the copper-plate, was of little account as an etcher. What was valuable in his teaching was the craft rather than the art of etching, most valuable of all being that essential part of the etcher's expression which culminates in the print. For a student so curiously responsive as Frank Short to every phase of craftsmanship through which art may be expressive, Goulding was the very teacher, and it was not long before the pupil was officially recognised as the master's assistant. At that time, and indeed until Short succeeded in 1891 to the full direction of the etching class at South Kensington, and instituted a regime better calculated to evoke individual artistic expression, the students were not encouraged, or even allowed, to etch pictorial subjects of their own, but they were given as models chosen objects in the Museum. Of these they were expected to make accurate studies in full-toned line-etching, representing texture of material as well as solidity of form, such studies being purchased for the Museum's collection when of sufficient excellence. Needless to say that Frank Short, recognising the technical value of such practice, wrought, in those eager busy student days of his, a few plates that reached the Museum's standard of exact representation. There is, indeed, a *Venetian Lamp*, numbered 8 in Colonel E. F. Strange's Catalogue of the master's "Etched and Engraved

Work," (1908) which is etched with a vivid artistic truth and delicacy such as made worth while Whistler's *Wine Glass* and the still-life plates of Hollar and Jacquemart.

This was done in 1883, but already Short had begun to select his landscape subjects for the features in them that appealed essentially to linear treatment, and to draw these direct from nature on the copper covered with etching-ground of his own preparing, which was to be the regular practice of his career. He was working then in a little studio in Chelsea, and he would go to the riverside for his subjects, to Battersea, Putney, Twickenham, and his eye got early accustomed to the etching value of long lines determining reaches of quiet water and shore, appreciating this also when he began to seek his subjects further afield, on the coast, in Poole, in Rye. Yet perhaps the most ambitious of his earliest period were the elaborately etched *St. Magnus Church, Billingsgate, No. 2* (S. 14) and *New Inn, Poole* (S. 19) both published in the short-lived series "English Etchings." But even in those student days Short was constantly active with technical experiment and adventure. From the bitten line he turned to the bitten tone, and made his first essay with aquatint, a medium which had fallen into disfavour and desuetude, yet which, although Ruskin advised him not to waste his time upon it, Frank Short was destined to use to its fullest expressive capacity

this inspiring message from Ruskin, which in those early days stirred all the poet, all the artist in the young engraver, how much may we not owe of that exquisite series of landscape mezzotints in which he has rendered his own visions of nature in moods of tenderness and mystery? If mastery of mezzotint were the condition of this volume, what lovely pictures of sea-coast and riparian landscape we should have to show with all their expressive contrasts or harmonies of light and atmosphere revealed! The very titles suggest pictorial poems: *The West's Goodnight to the East; When the weary Moon was in the Wane; A Slant of Light in Polperro Harbour; Solway Fishers; The Sun went down in his Wrath; Per Horse-power per Hour, Whitby Harbour; Orion over Thames at Ranelagh; The Night Picket Boat at Hammer-smith; Moonrise on the Bure.*

As the modern master of mezzotint Sir Frank Short is supreme; as a modern master of etching he is one of a small select group, but of that group he is the veteran, the doyen. While in Great Britain he is the officially recognised representative of the etchers and engravers, it must not be forgotten that before most of them were born, or at least had begun their careers, all but forty years ago, Frank Short—Sir Frank Short, R.A., P.R.E., as we have known him now some years—made his mark as an authentic etcher of landscape, with a

freshness of pictorial conception, and a spacious linear manner of communicating it exquisitely reticent in its expressiveness and distinctively his own. This manner, so personally distinguished that it amounts to style, has in the succeeding decades, been the cause of so much etching in others that the master's originality is apt to be forgotten in the sincerity of the imitative flattery of his followers. Elected in 1885 to the Society of Painter-Etchers, Short's original expression with the etching-needle had been interrupted for a while by his continuous work on the *Liber Studiorum* plates, but what he learnt of the purely structural line and accent value from Turner's basic etchings for the mezzotint probably helped him more than he realised to his own mastery of linear expression. Always a purist with regard to the clean vital etched line of the Rembrandt tradition, when in 1887 he showed his new plates he revealed himself a matured etcher who had something really fresh to say. There was then no popular demand for etchings, although Seymour Haden sold many of his, and Whistler's "Second Venice Set" had been published, though without exciting the print-market, but Robert Dunthorne, the print-seller, who had given his practical support to the *Liber Studiorum* enterprise, was prepared to purchase Shorts' original plates, while already the rare-discerning connoisseur had his eye on them. It was with his little

plate called *Wrought Nails, Halesowen* (S. 62) that Frank Short first claimed serious attention as an etcher. This was a bleak ragged scene drawn direct out of doors in the winter-time—a bit of the nail-making district between Stourbridge and Lye, locally known as “Hell-Hole”—just a cluster of poor folk’s cottages and work-sheds, or “nail-shops,” on a bare low hill, suggesting hard conditions of life, even without the clue provided by the sympathetic *vers libres* etched on the plate. Altogether an etching of character, with the lines so significant in their economy, the composition so eloquent in its simplicity. But it was a more serene aspect of landscape that appealed to the temperamental artist in Short, and inspired his expressive best upon the copper, not the leafy landscape of meadow or woodland, but the low lying landscape especially that embraces the southern sea-coast, with some quiet port or haven, or the shores of a tidal river, and gently takes the beauty of sunrise, sunset or twilight. In the charming plates of the Bosham Set, therefore, he begins to show the kind of subject he loved best, and his intuitive etchers’ way of interpreting it. In *Sleeping till the Flood* (S. 63) [Plate I] see how the lines, so delicately selected, drawn and bitten, each carrying with its adjacent space just its freight of pictorial suggestion and no more, carry ones vision in the gentle early morning light, between the

sloping shore and the old timbered wharf, along the creek with its shallow pools left by the out-gone tide, to the stranded boats waiting for the tide’s return, and the distant houses of the folk that live by the boats. Here was a new etcher’s lyric, and so distinctively did it and its fellows sing on the copper, that Whistler, I remember, was moved to gladden the modest young etcher with a surprise visit of congratulation, a generous gesture that really carried with it a master’s welcome to a master.

Scarcely less exquisite than *Sleeping till the Flood* were *Evening, Bosham* (S. 65) with its poetic expression, and “*The Patience*,” *Bosham* (S. 64) with the beautifully drawn boats alongside the wharf; but Frank Short’s etching-needle would always be inspired by the rhythmical lines of the hull and rigging of any kind of craft. *Rye Port*, (S. 73) was a further typical example of the etcher’s matured outlook, and then came the beautiful masterpiece *Low Tide, the Evening Star, and Rye’s long pier deserted* (S. 78) [Plate II] which made the year 1888 particularly memorable in the artist’s career, and in the history of etching, for it gave a new classic to the art. I have so often written in praise of this lovely plate, in which the etcher’s idiom holds the poetry of evening twilight implicit, and my admiration of it is so constant that it would seem foolish to search for fresh phrases to express

it when I only want to say again with emphasis what I have said before. How shall I speak freshly of the wealth of visual suggestion in these long rhythmic lines with their delicate variations of tone, in these untouched spaces which assume, as it were, tones from the lines that shape them? It is sufficient that we see the old stones of the pier, which have stood in their solid strength against storm and tide, sharing the gentle charm of evening with the quiet shallow waters and wet sandy shore, while, like the London houses in Wordsworth's Sonnet, the very masts, hulls, and sheds of the little port seem asleep.

A visit to South Cornwall in the same year resulted in an interesting group of etchings, of which one may note as the most distinctive *The Mooring Stone, Polperro Harbour* (S. 79), *The "Lowlands Low," Hayle Pool* (S. 82) and *Talland, Cornwall* (S. 84). The quaint plate *A Dutch Greengrocerie* (S. 110) and *Unloading Peat, Dort* (S. 111) record a Dutch visit, and then we come to the very important dry-point *A Wintry Blast on the Stourbridge Canal* (S. 114) [Plate III]. Here in 1890 the artist had found a new motive for the medium, and with tremendously vivid effect he showed the turbulence of the weather on this bleak bit of the Midlands, with the pitiless wind and rain blustering over the canal waters and among the bare writhing trees and the stark fac-

tory chimneys. This plate, so different in character from any other of Sir Frank's, the unity of impression being achieved with such fine artistic impulse in the handling of the dry-point, is the rarest and most eagerly bid for of all his line plates. 1890 was a prolific year, and a visit to East Anglia, which produced a soft-ground etching of *Walberswick Pier* (S. 118) as well as a hard line of the same subject, and *A quiet evening on the Ferry over the Blyth* (S. 122), was followed by a busy time in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, of which the most notable etching results were *George's Dock, Liverpool* (S. 119), *The breaking up of the Great Eastern* (S. 120) *Bromborough, a Cornfield by the Mersey* (S. 130) and *Entrance to the Mersey from Waterloo Sands* (S. 131), a very characteristic plate of spacious conception, and exquisitely etched. Our next two illustrations, represent a visit to the South West of Scotland, the pictorial fascination of which engaged Frank Short with mezzotint (*Solway Fishers*, S. 152 and *Nithsdale*, S. 154) aquatint and etching, both hard and soft-ground. Soft-ground etching has never been a medium of popular appeal for its intrinsic qualities, though it has been much used as an auxiliary to other methods, particularly to suggest form and accent in connection with aquatint; but some fine things have been done with it. Cotman used it for some distinguished plates: Turner's *Calm* is exquisite, but

in *Gathering the Flock on Maxwell Bank* (S. 149) [Plate IV] Short has used the medium to its fullest capacity and mastered it. In depicting this storm-threatened plain, near the river Nith in Galloway, he has made soft-ground etching respond to every pictorial demand of the spacious landscape's changing aspect under the uncertain temper of that cloud-breaking sky, with the parallel lines of black and white in the centre indicating the scurrying flock of sheep with their woolly bodies and black legs. *The Solway at Mid-day* (S. 144) [Plate V] is an etcher's triumph of suggestive drawing and biting, each line, each touch, helping to lure the vision away through the haze across the calm waters of the Firth to a dream of distant hills. This was in 1891, and the next year Holland called Short back, as it calls all etchers. A lot of jolly plates resulted: *Skies a-clearing, sun a-shining, and the evensong a-chiming. The Church at Kampen* (S. 163), *Overijssel, Deventer* (S. 166), *Over the Meadows to Monnikendam* (S. 168), *The Bell-Tower, Monnikendam* (S. 169), *Deventer* (S. 171), *Towers of Kampen* (S. 172), *The Dijk Bell* (S. 183) *Sketch of Monnikendam in the Distance* (S. 185), and *Noon on the Zuider Zee* (S. 173) [Plate VI]. This is one of the very rare instances in which Short would seem to have been interested in drawing human beings for their own sakes—yet was it not, perhaps, because these Volendam peasants in their

picturesque costumes idling about the quay were just incidental to the characteristic scene that caught the etcher's interest? There is generally human nature somewhere significant in Frank Short's landscapes. Even in his fine dry-point *Niagara* (S. 215), you will find a church, and in the etching *South Coast Road, Pegwell Bay* (S. 249) so greatly improved in its second state 17 years later, there is the very human interest of a wayside inn to add to the charm of the white cliffs and the seashore. But, devoted as Frank Short is to the coast, he can be drawn inland by a fine sweep of Downs, an old barn, or a windmill. He will go any distance to draw a windmill, he loves its lines as he loves the pure bitten line of the Rembrandt tradition, and nothing gives him greater joy than to wed the two. In *April Day in Kent* (S. 254) [Plate VII] the windmill stands with its old-world dignity dominating the place, which is Lydd, and challenging the windy sky. But Frank Short is always responsive to an appealing subject that offers him a good etcher's motive. He found one in *Strolling Players at Lydd* (S. 276) [Plate IX.] where, between the village inn and a barn and over against the church, the caravans are resting, and the long tent is set up, and the villagers are beginning to assemble in the evening light, and the show is "just a-going to begin." This, together with *A Lane in Arundel* (S. 277)

must have been done shortly after the election of Frank Short and William Strang to the Royal Academy as Associate-Engravers, a momentous event since it was the first time original engravers as such had been elected to the Academy. He further justified this in the splendid dry-point *Peperil's Castle* (S. 283) [Plate VIII] which, in depicting the bold romantic aspect of the Derbyshire scene, showed a fresh mastery of the medium's resources for tonal emphasis; just as in the very original plate *The Street, Whitstable* (S. 290) [Plate X] he combined the most searching economy of draughtsmanship with the utmost delicacy of the etcher's craft to command a spacious vision of that interesting bit of the Thanet coast, where the oyster beds lie.

Frank Short was now, in 1910, elected to the full honours of the Royal Academy, the first engraver to receive these for thirty years, while the death of Sir Francis Seymour Haden left vacant the Presidency of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers, which Short was chosen to fill as by a sort of divine right of succession. A knighthood followed also as a matter of course. And now to return briefly to the etchings of these later years. Of these perhaps the most notable have been *Strand Gate, Winchelsea* (S. 291), *Winchelsea Marshes* (S. 296), the dry-points *Sion House* (S. 297) and *Hobb's Howth* (S. 339), *Kippford*

(S. 327), *The "Rising Sun," Kingsdown* (S. 332) awarded the Logan medal of the Chicago Society of Etchers, *The Lusitania Raft on Broadstairs Pier* (S. 328), the Print Collector's Club presentation plate, *Rough Weather at Blatchington* (S. 340) and *The Sea Road into Seaford* (S. 341) [Plate XII] in which, though his latest plate, fortythree years later than his first, the master's vision has lost none of its keenness, his hand none of its strength and skill. The same may be said of the exquisite spirit-ground aquatint, *Morning Haze in Chichester Harbour* (S. 337), [Plate XI] in which he has delicately triumphed over the tenderest play of light and atmosphere with the scarcely realised surface of a placid watery expanse. But to realise to the full Sir Frank Short's versatile mastery of aquatint one must recall—and I wish it could be here with reproduction—such beautiful examples of his art as *The Curfew, Rye* (S. 75), *Sunrise o'er Whitby Scaur* (S. 220), *Span of Old Battersea Bridge* (S. 226), *Dawn* (S. 298), *The Thames at Twickenham* (S. 299), *Silver Tide* (S. 300), and *The New Moon* (S. 321). To note how the master has used dust-ground or spirit-ground as the pictorial motive seemed to demand is in itself a liberal education in the craftsmanship of art.

MALCOLM C. SALAMAN

MODERN MASTERS OF ETCHING

1. FRANK BRANGWYN, R.A.
2. JAMES McBEY
3. ANDERS ZORN
4. J. L. FORAIN
5. SIR FRANK SHORT, R.A., P.R.E., R.I.

IN PREPARATION

6. FRANK W. BENSON
7. SIR DAVID YOUNG CAMERON, R.A.

THE EDITOR DESIRES TO ACKNOWLEDGE
THE ASSISTANCE RENDERED TO HIM IN THE
PREPARATION OF THIS FOLIO BY THE ARTIST,
SIR FRANK SHORT, AND MESSRS. ROBERT
DUNTHORNE & SON, WHO HAVE KINDLY
ALLOWED THE PRINTS TO BE REPRODUCED.

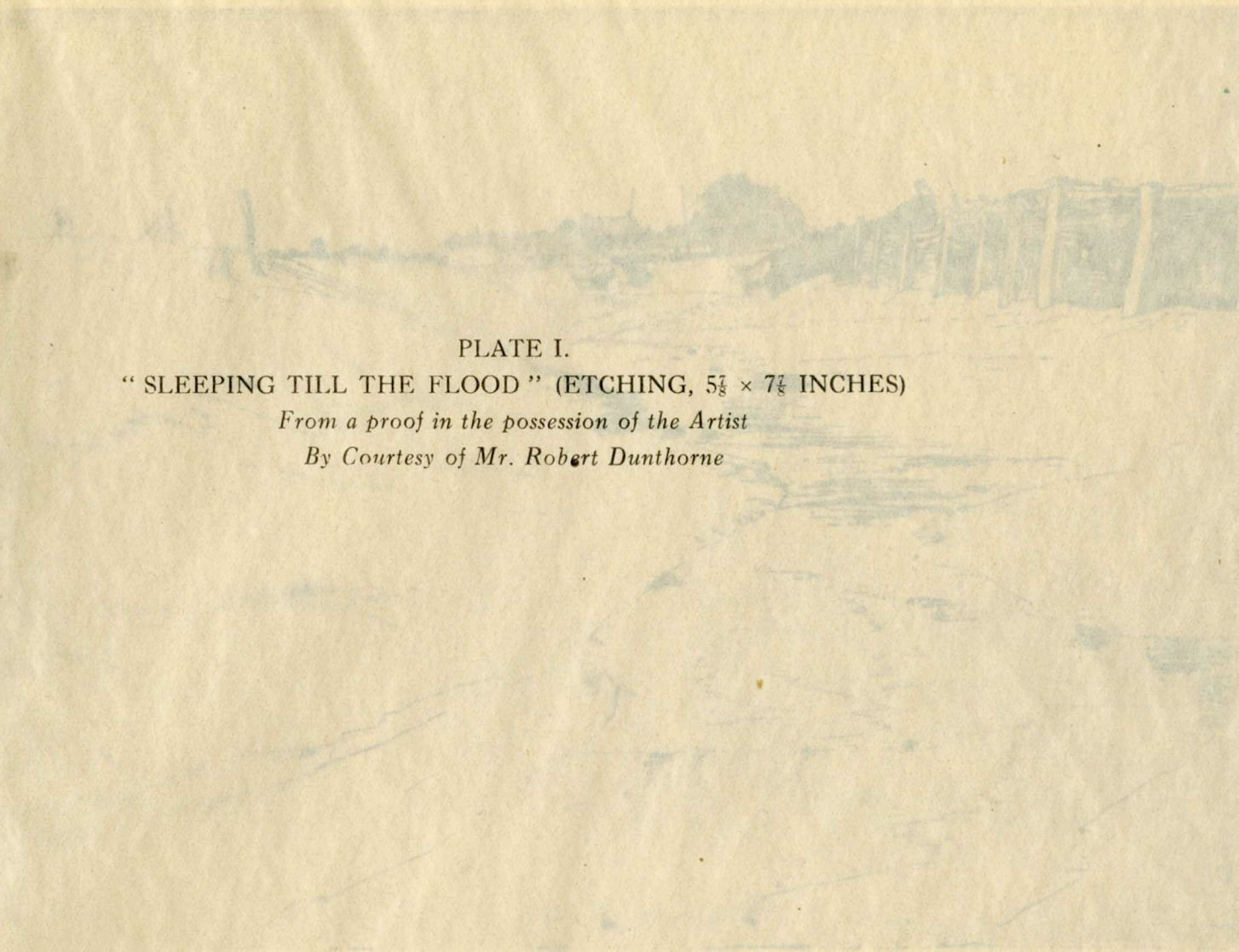


PLATE I.

“ SLEEPING TILL THE FLOOD ” (ETCHING, $5\frac{7}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ INCHES)

From a proof in the possession of the Artist

By Courtesy of Mr. Robert Dunthorne

MODERN MASTERS OF ETCHING

1. FRANK BRANGWYN, R.A.

2. JAMES McBEY

3. ANDERS ZORN

4. J. L. FORAIN

PLATE I.

5. "SLEEPING TILL THE FLOOD," (ETCHING, 25 x 35 INCHES)

From a proof in the possession of the Artist

By Courtesy of Mr. Robert Dunthorne

6. FRANK W. BRANGWYN

7. SIR DAVID YOUNG, R.A.

THE EDITOR DESIRES TO ACKNOWLEDGE
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PLATE II.

“ LOW TIDE, THE EVENING STAR, AND RYE’S LONG PIER DESERTED ”

(ETCHING, $7\frac{1}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{8}$ INCHES)

From a proof in the possession of the Artist

By Courtesy of Mr. Robert Dunthorne

PLATE II.
"LOW TIDE, THE EVENING STAR, AND RYE'S LONG PIER DESERTED."
(ETCHING, $7\frac{1}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$ INCHES)
From a proof in the possession of the Artist
By Courtesy of Mr. Robert Duntorne



Low water and the masts of the
ships are visible

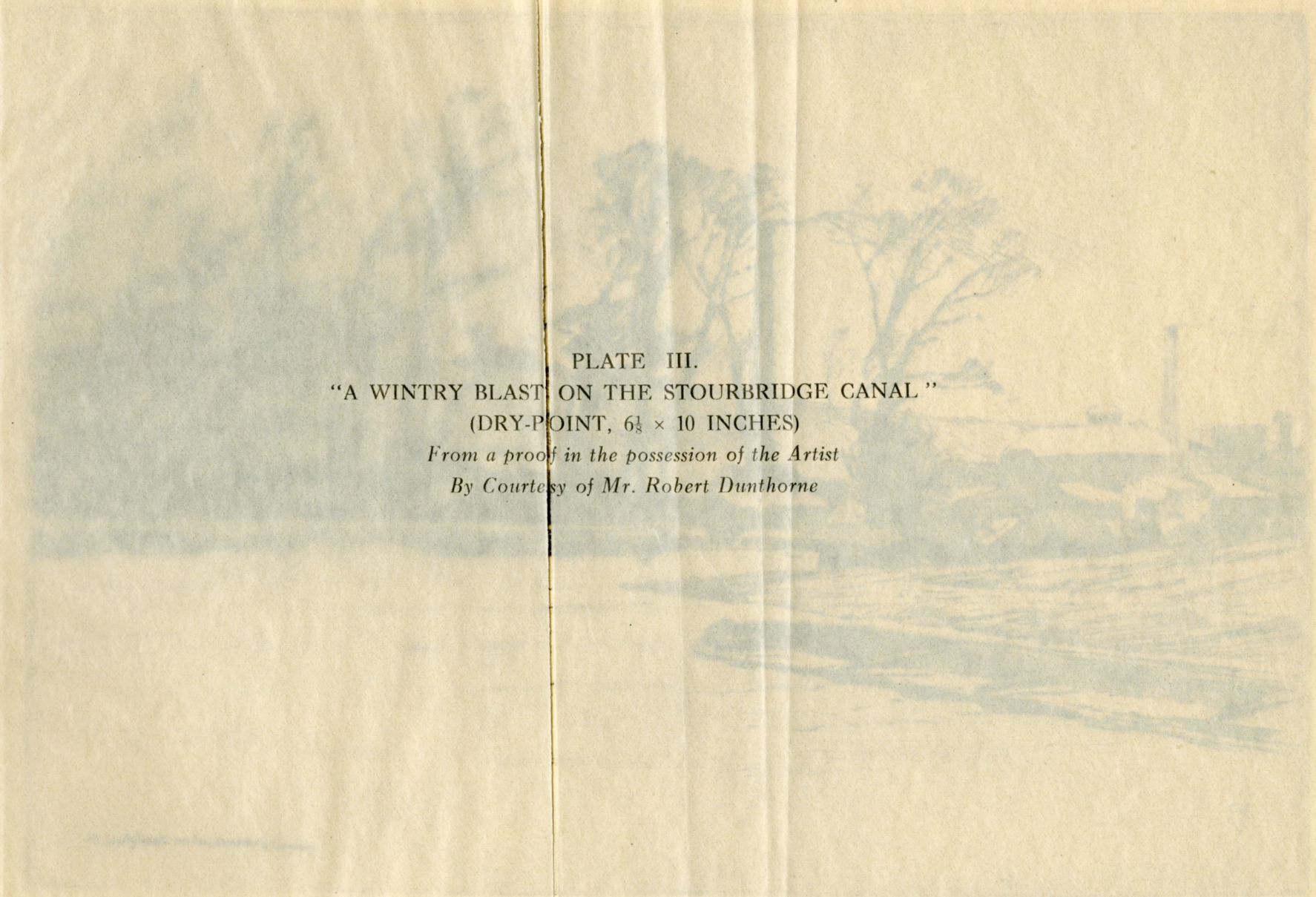


PLATE III.

"A WINTRY BLAST ON THE STOURBRIDGE CANAL "

(DRY-POINT, $6\frac{1}{8} \times 10$ INCHES)

From a proof in the possession of the Artist

By Courtesy of Mr. Robert Dunthorne

PLATE III.
"A WINTERY BLAST ON THE STOURBRIDGE CANAL."
(DRY-POINT, 6½ x 10 INCHES)
From a proof in the possession of the Artist
By Courtesy of Mr. Robert Dunthorne



PLATE IV.
" GATHERING THE FLOCK ON MAXWELL BANK "

(SOFT GROUND ETCHING, $5\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ INCHES)

From a proof in the possession of the Artist

From a proof in the possession of the Artist
(SOFT GROUND ETCHING, $2\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ INCHES)
"GATHERING THE FLOCK ON MAXWELL BANK"
PLATE IV.

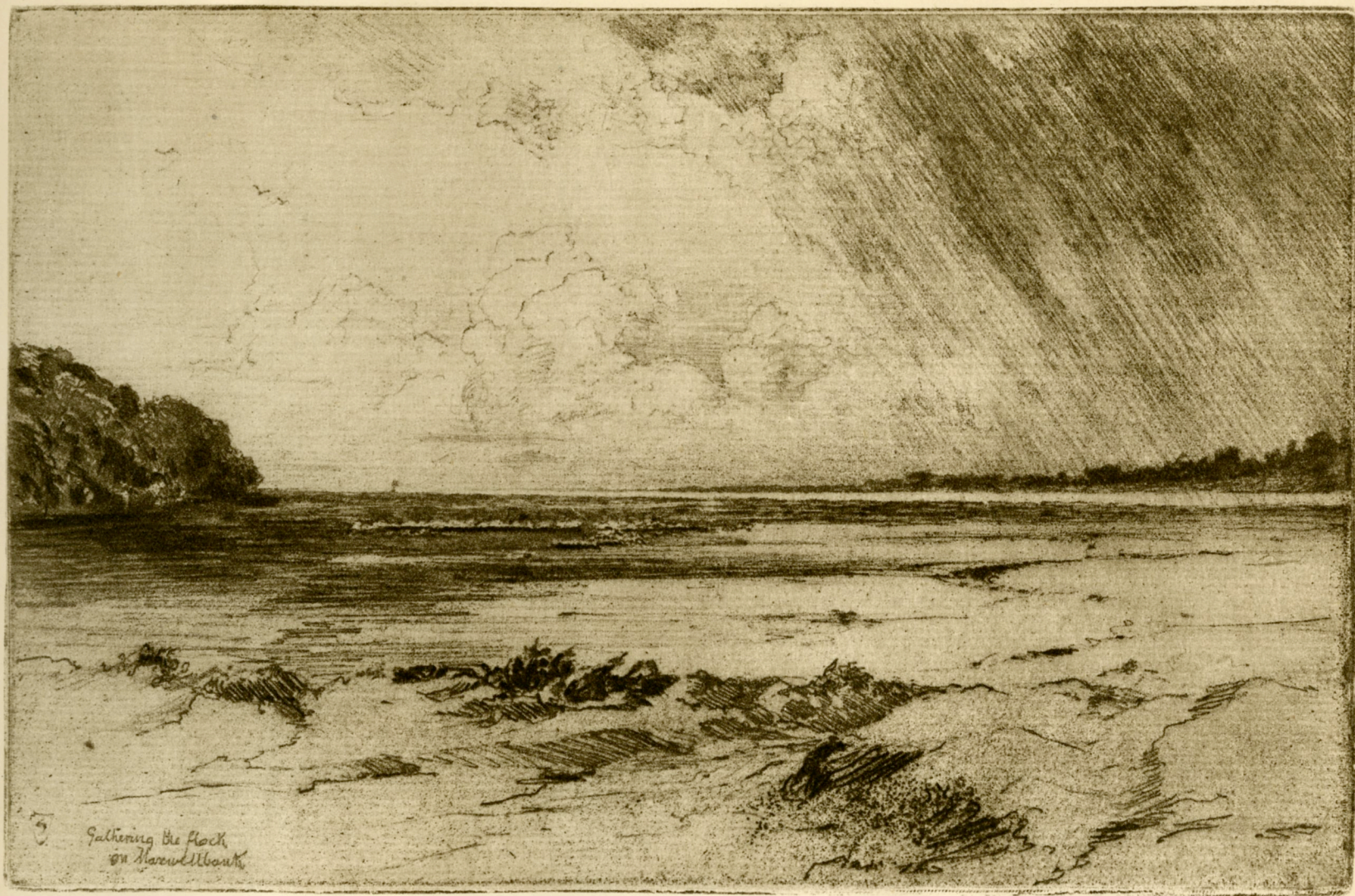
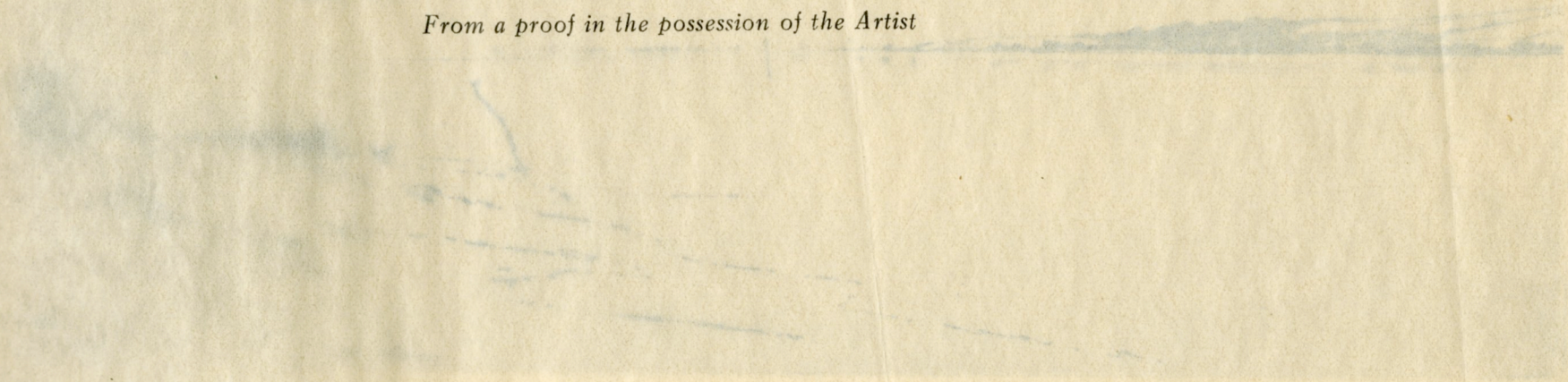


PLATE V.
"THE SOLWAY AT MIDDAY" (ETCHING, $3\frac{1}{8} \times 10$ INCHES)
From a proof in the possession of the Artist



From a proof in the possession of the Artist
"THE SOLWAY AT MIDDAY" (ETCHING, $3\frac{1}{2} \times 10$ INCHES)
PLATE V.



1891

The Solway

V

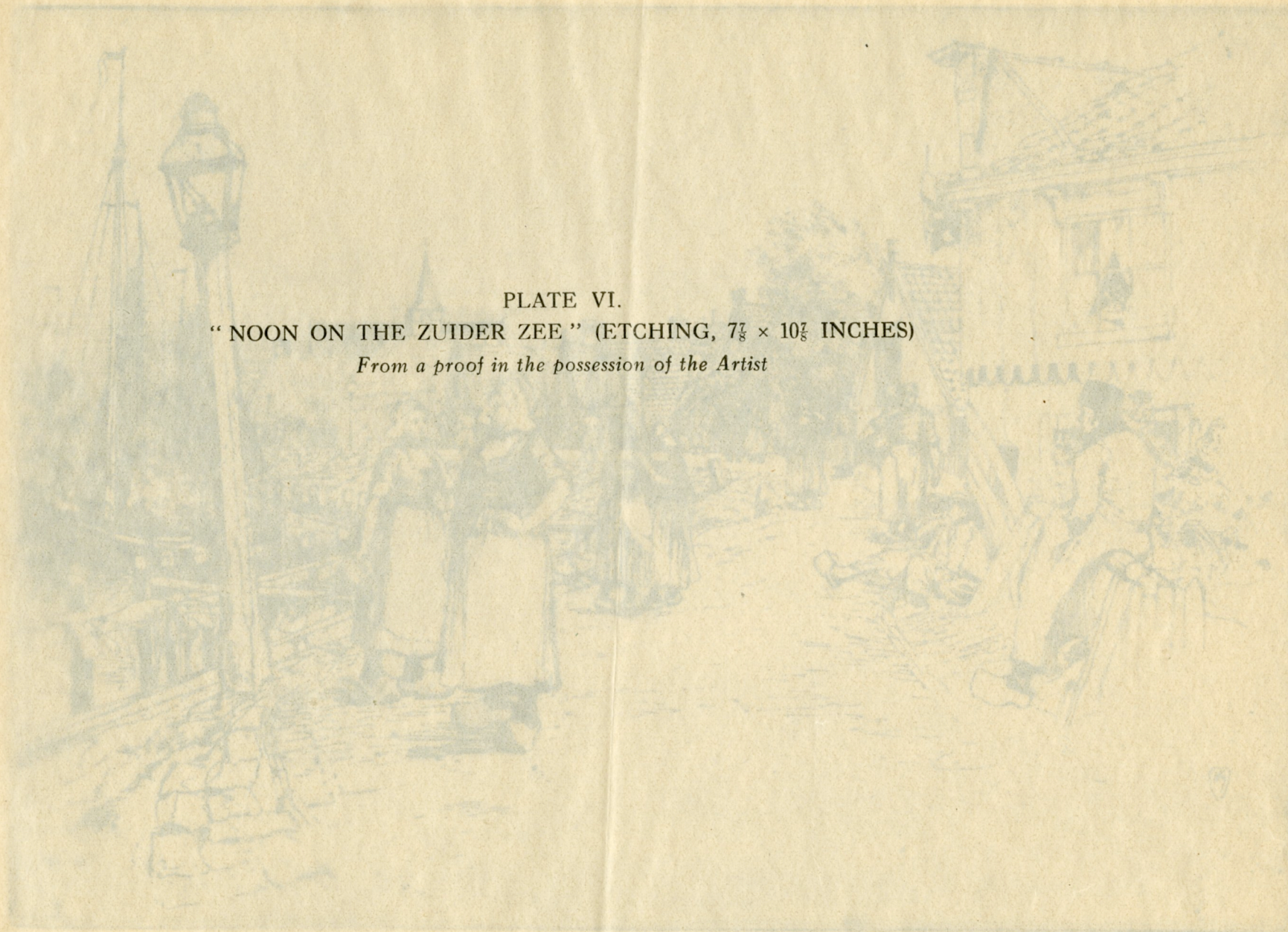


PLATE VI.

"NOON ON THE ZUIDER ZEE" (ETCHING, $7\frac{7}{8} \times 10\frac{7}{8}$ INCHES)

From a proof in the possession of the Artist

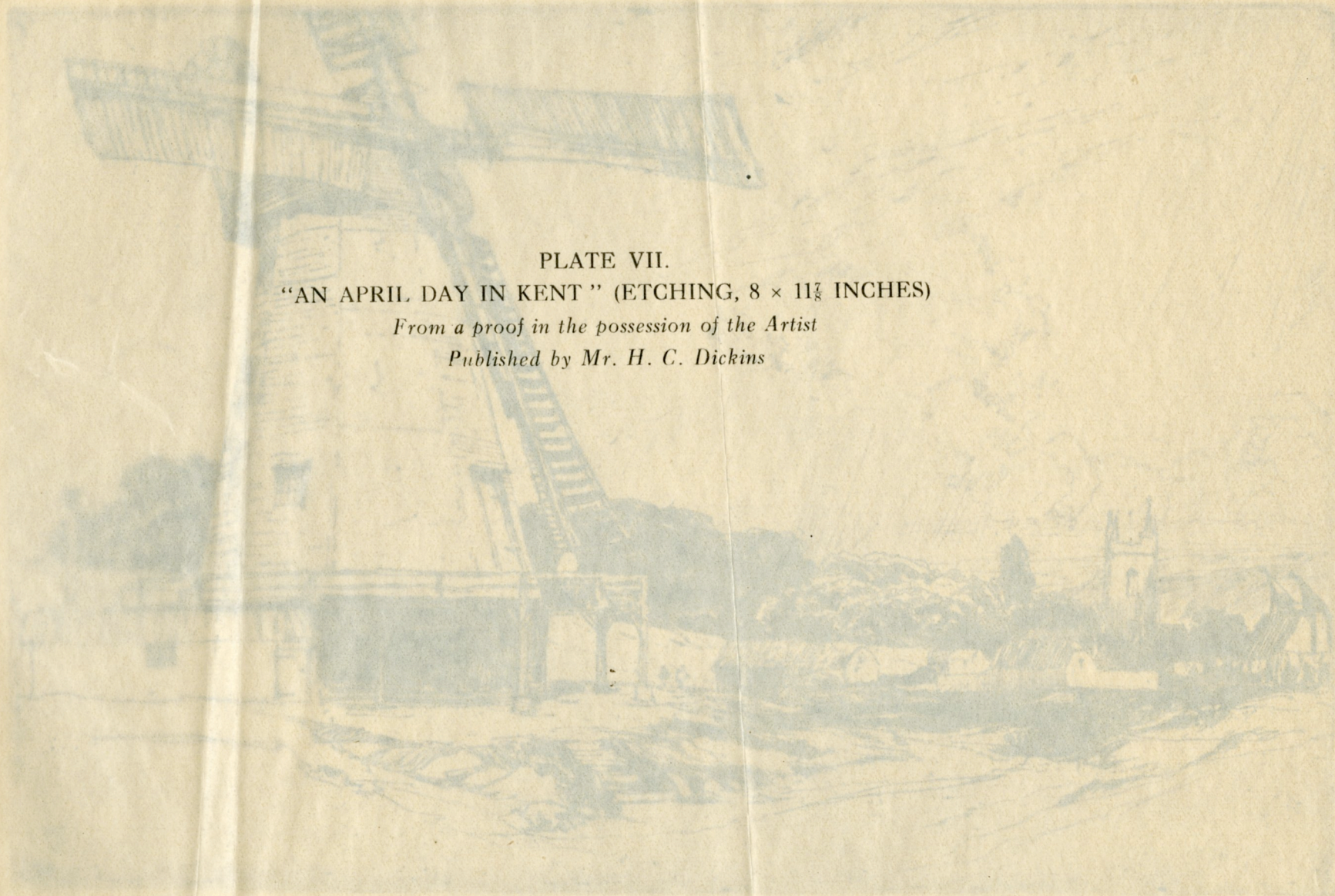


PLATE VII.

"AN APRIL DAY IN KENT" (ETCHING, $8 \times 11\frac{1}{8}$ INCHES)

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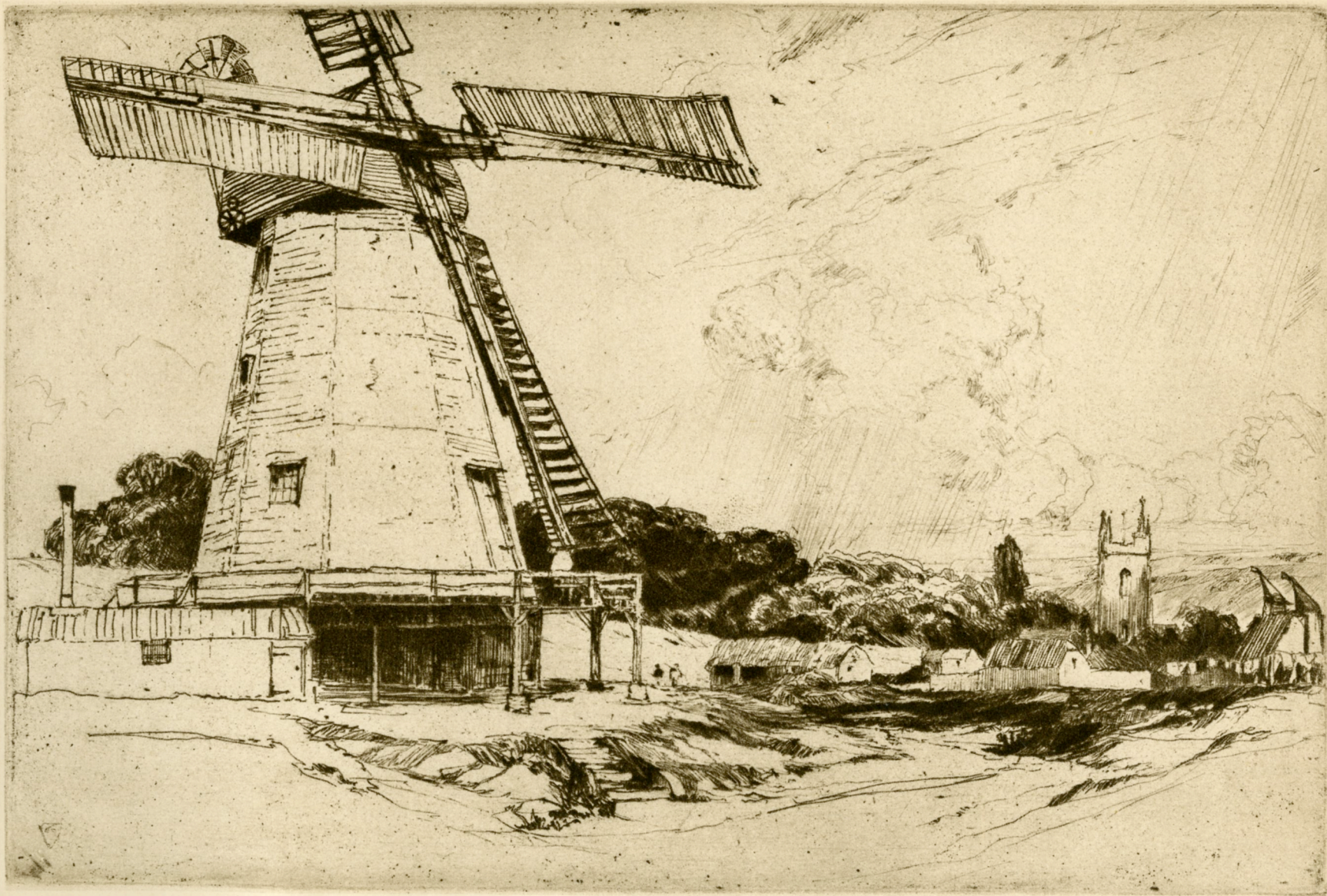


PLATE VIII.

“ PEVERIL'S CASTLE ” (DRY-POINT, $8\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ INCHES)

From a proof in the possession of the Artist

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PLATE VIII.
"PEVERIL'S CASTLE" (DRY-POINT, $8\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ INCHES)
From a proof in the possession of the Artist
Published by Mr. H. C. Dickinson



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PLATE IX.

" STROLLING PLAYERS AT LYDD " (ETCHING, 7 × 10 INCHES)

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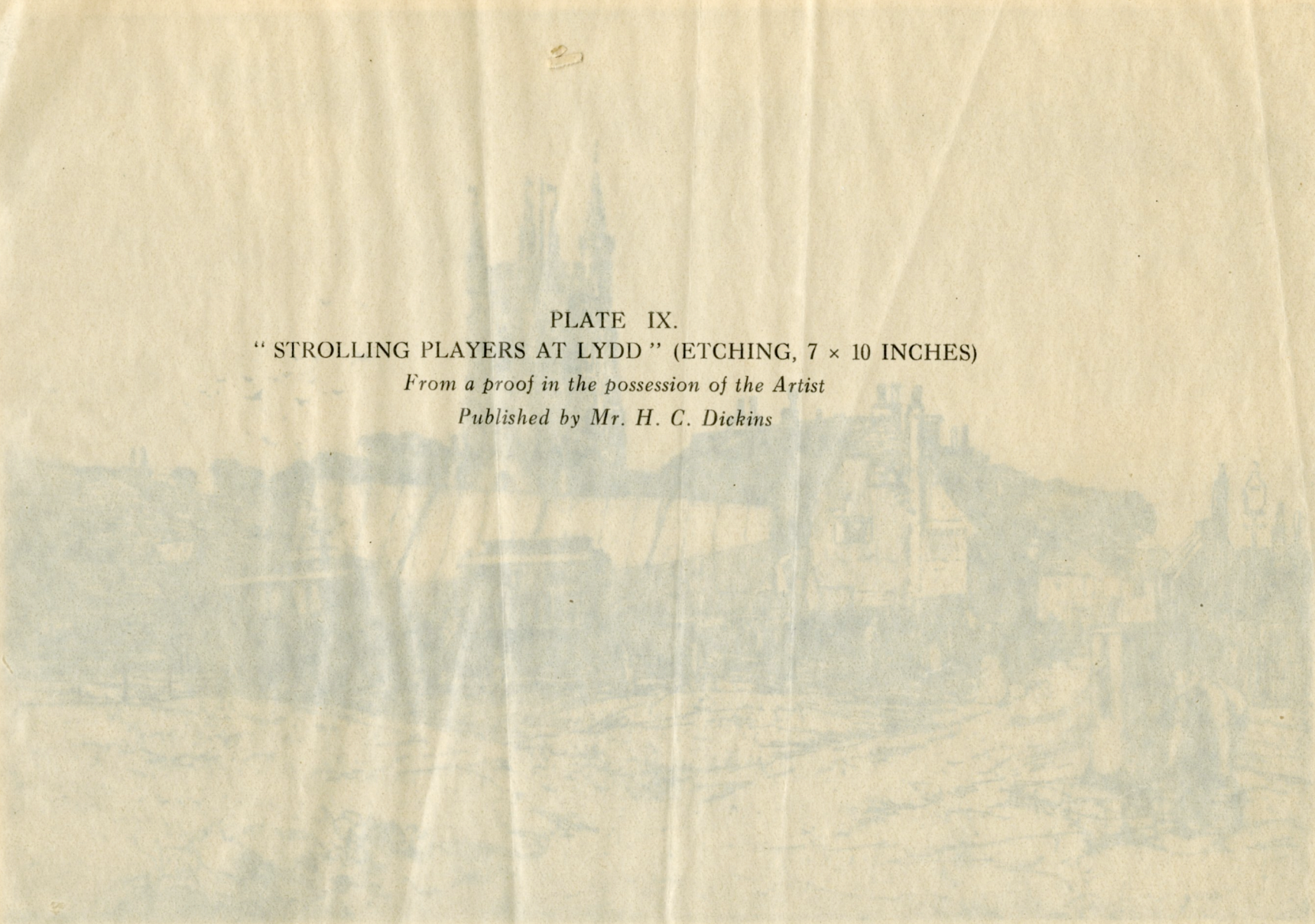


PLATE IX.
"STROLLING PLAYERS AT LYDD." (ETCHING, 7 x 10 INCHES)
From a proof in the possession of the Artist
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PLATE X.

“ ‘ THE STREET,’ WHITSTABLE ” (ETCHING, $9\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ INCHES)

From a proof in the possession of the Artist

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PLATE XI.

“ MORNING HAZE IN CHICHESTER HARBOUR ”

(AQUATINT, $9\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{7}{8}$ INCHES)

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PLATE XI.
"MORNING HAZE IN CHICHESTER HARBOUR"
(AQUATINT, $9\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ INCHES)
From a proof in the possession of the Artist
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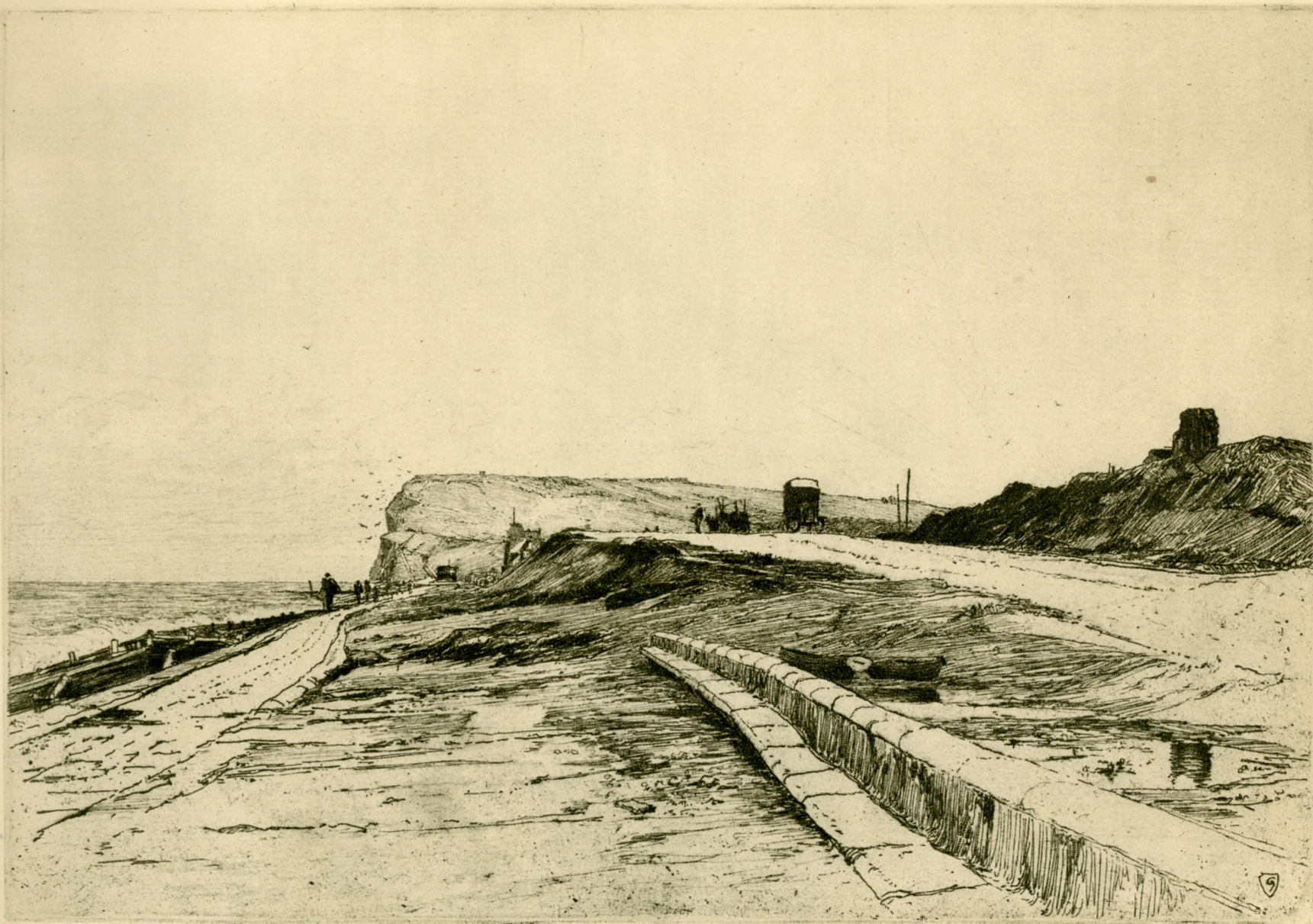
PLATE XII.

“ THE SEA ROAD INTO SEAFORD ” (ETCHING, $6\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$ INCHES)

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Sir Frank Short, R.A., P.R.
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